CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.623
17 June 1992

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SIX HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 4 June 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto García Moritán (Argentina)

GE.92-61675/4581B

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 623rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In keeping with the timetable of meetings for this week, the Conference will hold today, at the end of this plenary meeting, an informal meeting on substantive issues under item 3 of the agenda of the Conference, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". Also today, at 12.30 p.m., the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons will meet in room V with this same team of interpreters.

On the list of speakers for today are representatives of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Mongolia, Poland and Australia. I now call on the first speaker on the list, the representative of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Ambassador Králik.

Mr. KRALIK (Czechoslovakia): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success in carrying out this responsible task, which, I am sure, will be in good hands. You can count on the cooperation of my delegation. Let me use this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Semichi, the representative of Algeria, for his important contribution during the first weeks of the second part of this 1992 session. I also wish to welcome our new colleagues, Ambassador Tanaka from Japan and Ambassador Sir Michael Weston from the United Kingdom.

Today I am going to start with the item which is at the top of our agenda. In our lengthy negotiations directed towards a comprehensive and total ban of chemical weapons, it has become increasingly apparent, especially during the last year, that time is moving fast and there are unresolved questions still to be dealt with. I should like to begin by saying that we are coming close to the completion of many years of effort toward achieving a global ban on chemical weapons. We must not let such an opportunity pass us by. World public opinion is watching us with great interest. Accommodating moves in the area of verification, the crystallization of legal and technical aspects of the convention, as well as attractive, far-reaching offers of a site for the future international organization for the ban on chemical weapons, have had a wide response and support among the delegations, including my own. Working paper WP.400 is not only a basis for further negotiations; it is also a model for possible final compromise. Therefore the approach of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons and his team is welcomed and enjoys our full support. There is no longer much time left for reiterating well-known national positions. The political willingness expressed by practically all the participants in these negotiations should take shape in an acceptable compromise. Certainly nobody expects to be 100 per cent satisfied with everything and so a logical modus operandi should do away with any insistence on details which is often quite unnecessary. I know that some of them are extremely important, but perhaps we should be more

(Mr. Králik, Czechoslovakia)

concerned with creating the whole mosaic and not just with the sum of its parts, even if they may be perfect little stones. Sometimes I wonder if this enormous effort does not grow out of a fear that something has been forgotten or that one aspect has been overlooked in the text of the convention. What then? Will it be possible to correct it in the future? Will annual or other conferences of the States parties be able to reach an appropriate solution? I do hope that any kind of parallel with some review conferences which did not come up to expectations will not apply. In this case, the appropriately worded article XV in WP.400 on amendments and changes would have no sense. I have not the slightest doubt that in cases of need and given vigorous developments in the field of chemistry, the member States will certainly be able to make adequate general adjustments according to need and in the spirit and letter of the convention.

I would like to make a few brief remarks on some of the unresolved questions. Efforts to find an acceptable composition of the executive council must be crowned by a pragmatic formulation. Equitable geographical distribution certainly does not mean an equal number of seats, as in option 1. This is not at all in keeping with the understanding of geographical distribution which has traditionally operated within the United Nations framework. I am of the opinion that the executive body of the future organization can be most effective and flexible in decision-making and in finding correct solutions only if it is not of a discriminatory nature. The right of every country to take part in its activities with due respect to specific criteria, including that of industrial development, is appropriately reflected in option 2, that is, the distribution of seats within the framework of the traditional five United Nations groups. Variability, or rather, supplementation, is possible, but the basic framework according to United Nations structures, should be maintained. I have also welcomed the suggestion that the executive council would to some degree be involved in resolving such delicate questions like the timetable for the destruction of chemical weapons arsenals and the possible conversion of CW production facilities. This problem should be considered from every aspect with full awareness not only of the existing difficulties, but also of the capacities and experiences which future States parties to the chemical weapons convention have at their disposal and which they are willing to make available in order to find a comprehensive solution. Article XI is an indivisible part of the convention and therefore harmonizing it with the rest of the text as a whole must be based on an acceptable compromise. The unrestricted transfer of controlled chemical substances would be in conflict with the priority aims of the convention, with the banning and elimination of chemical weapons. Free access to chemical substances, while maintaining the basic rule of controlling the proliferation of means for the production or development of chemical agents, should be in the form of an enticement and as a logical reward for adhering to the convention. The financial application with the realization of the CWC should be at least partially balanced in just this way. The last area which WP.400 does not deal with is the headquarters of the future organization. All three candidates have their advantages and disadvantages. Many of us recently had a chance to judge this. I would like to use this occasion to

(Mr. Králik, Czechoslovakia)

also thank the representatives of Austria and the Netherlands who were our hosts in Vienna and The Hague. No matter what the final decision will be, I believe that both these cities, along with Geneva, will remain always in favour of a ban on chemical weapons. As far as the seat of the future organization is concerned, I am honoured to declare that I have recently informed the newly elected President Klestil of Austria that unofficial support for Vienna has now become the official position of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic.

I would like to use this opportunity to put forward one procedural suggestion. It cannot be ruled out that our Conference will not be able to decide on the headquarters site by consensus from the very beginning. In the event that there would be some kind of a decision-making process (we could call it a vote), then I would urge that the winner of the secret ballotting - and I leave the detailed procedure up to Ambassador Kamal - would be accepted as the compromise solution by consensus. But this is just an idea which I submit for your consideration. The other CWC problems are in the negotiation stage and so I will not reiterate our national standpoint.

Just briefly on the other points on the agenda. I am delighted by the announcement of France that it will take part in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. This is an example of a new approach to the substance of the matter and it will surely have very positive implications for further developments in this exceptionally important and closely followed question. I do hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban will be established soon. In the same breath, I would like to add that I foresee a close relationship between the complex solution of questions connected with nuclear testing and negative security assurances. As last year's Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on NSA, I believe that because of improved international conditions, the time is ripe now for this anticipated shift. After the completion of the chemical weapons convention, in which I firmly believe, the problems of outer space will then come to the fore. All that is needed to make this happen are those measures of mutual trust and a beginning of the same cooperation which I have witnessed during the last few months in the question of transparency in armaments.

We have been talking for a long time about the need to reorganize the agenda of the Conference. The negotiating Decalogue, which was handed down to us by the first United Nations special session on disarmament, corresponds to the period in which it emerged. But more recently, we have witnessed tremendous changes which call for flexibility on the part of the Conference on Disarmament. The fact that the Conference adopted a new negotiation item, "Transparency in armaments", shows that it is able to respond to the present challenge. Personally, I am very glad that, particularly in this very important area, we have achieved a psychological breakthrough. I am convinced that the other questions, like the problem of non-proliferation, regional security- and confidence-building and -making measures, regional disarmament, etc., will also find their proper place in the agenda of the Conference.

(Mr. Králik, Czechoslovakia)

The saying goes that we are wiser when we leave than we were when we arrived. Since I am finishing my assignment in Geneva, I would like to share with you what I have learned during the two years in this forum. First of all, I have been once again convinced about the deep philosophical truth of Goethe's observation that the most precious trait of human character is the ability to conceive the whole truth of a reality. And indeed, in this forum those proposals that stood the greatest chance of being accepted were not those directed to some specific problem, but on the contrary, those which saw reality as a whole. In these cases, the lofty intellectual, political will of individual delegations, fortified by a willingness to assume responsibility for a concept and an ideal, could very soon and without opposition result in a mutually advantageous consensus around those points in the negotiations which were, and are, conducive to building a world where everyone is strong "not with the strength of arms, but with the strength of moral principles", which is what is most important. Wherever the process of creating a peaceful infrastructure was linked to the process of building an institution, our negotiating forum assumed responsibility of historic dimensions and with a categorical charge: to strive together so that the outcome of the negotiations of this forum are distinguished by the concept of clarity and structural strength, as well as by the power of the loftiest humanitarian principles. Thus this forum too has revealed the truth of Jan Amos Comenius' teaching that "The power of truth, armed with the light of knowledge, becomes invincible."

In the light of what I have just said, permit me in conclusion to express my deep conviction that the Conference on Disarmament will succeed and continue to promote this courageous and noble thought that will sustain those ideals which are so essential for the future of the world. But of course this will be only when we - along with Pericles - are able to say of each one of us who comes or goes: "But the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet, notwithstanding, go out to meet it."

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. Ambassador Králik has just made his last statement in the Conference plenary. His words will remain with us. I am sure that all the members of the Conference join me in expressing our appreciation for the enthusiasm, dedication and skill with which he discharged his funcions as representative of his country in our Conference. In a little over two years with us, Ambassador Králik distinguished himself as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances last year and by his tireless efforts representing his country's interests. He can be proud of the work he has accomplished. On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I wish Ambassador and Mrs. Králik all the best in their future activities.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): As this is the first time for me to address the Conference on Disarmament, I should like to thank all the members of the Conference for the warm words of welcome I have received on taking up my duties here as leader of the United Kingdom delegation. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference for the present period. It is a pleasure to see two distinguished members of the Argentine diplomatic service together on the podium as our President and Secretary-General. Argentina is a country with which the United Kingdom's close and traditional ties are happily, once again, firmly knotted. I should also like to thank Ambassador Semichi of Algeria for the way he conducted his presidency in the preceding period, involving, as it did, travel to both The Hague and Vienna, in both of which places he made numerous speeches with great charm on behalf of all of us who accompanied him. His was a particularly energetic stewardship. My delegation wishes to add its own welcome to those already offered to my fellow newcomer, Ambassador Tanaka of Japan. I have already seen enough of him to know how fortunate we are to have him with us. Lastly, I should like to offer my delegation's best wishes to Ambassador Králik on the occasion of his departure. We have listened with rapt attention to the wise advice he has given us this morning.

Until August 1990, I had, frankly, given little thought to chemical weapons, beyond entertaining a half-baked idea that knock-out drops might one day be developed as the ultimate, humane weapon. Then Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, some of them wearing protective masks. Many of us there recalled the horrifying pictures we had seen of Iranian victims of Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons. Over the following months, as we listened to BBC reports of NBC suits being issued to the coalition forces and civilians in neighbouring countries, the thoughts of those of us stranded in Kuwait turned frequently to chemical weapons and the possibility that we would find ourselves the helpless victims of a chemical attack. Fortunately, such an attack never materialized.

When I was posted here to Geneva, it was, therefore, with all the zeal of the convert that I approached the subject of the chemical weapons convention. I have been greatly impressed, and I confess surprised, by the serious and hard-headed way in which the negotiations on the CWC are now being pursued. I should like to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador von Wagner of Germany, for the way in which, with a combination of whip-cracking determination, skilful diplomacy and gentle humour, he is leading us towards the conclusion of the convention. There is now a genuine and widely shared desire to secure the best treaty we can this year, and a realization that this is preferable to continuing to strive for a probably unattainable ideal. My Government certainly shares this desire.

I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador von Wagner for his efforts to fulfil the mandate entrusted to him by numerous delegations who spoke in response to the "model" convention introduced by the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, on 19 March. The Australian draft, by showing

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

how close we were to a complete treaty text, provided a valuable spur to our work. Subsequently, working paper 400, presented by Ambassador von Wagner on 18 May, has taken us further down the final straight towards the conclusion of the negotiations.

There are, of course, still a number of points to be decided. Crucial to the success of the CWC will be the degree of confidence States parties have in the compliance of others with the obligations which will have been commonly assumed. For this, the effectiveness of the verification provisions will be of key importance. The right for any State party to request a challenge inspection will represent a vital means for providing assurance about compliance, avoiding potentially damaging mistrust, and thus helping to ensure that the convention works and continues to work in the future. But this will only happen if the requesting State party has a clear guarantee of a prompt response to its concerns, in the form of an inspection and, where necessary, follow-up action by the executive council and/or the conference of States parties. As everyone here knows well, my Government could have accepted, indeed would have welcomed, a more rapid and intrusive form of challenge inspection than that which is set out in working paper 400. But this was not to be. We also wanted the challenging State party to have the mandatory right to send an observer with the inspection team. We still hope that a way can be found to make this proposal acceptable to all other delegations. The challenge regime that is now on offer provides fully for the protection of all legitimate security concerns. Any weakening of its provisions could seriously undermine a central pillar of the CWC as a security instrument.

The routine monitoring and inspection of chemical industry will also be an important element of the treaty to deter misuse of civilian plants and of industrially important chemicals. For deterrence to be effective, inspections must be widespread. To be cost-effective, they must also be well targeted. I believe that the compromise proposal put forward by Western Group delegations in working paper 398 offers a way of combining these two objectives in a simple, straightforward and non-discriminatory regime. I hope it will be given serious and positive consideration by other delegations and provide a way out of the current dilemma on the issue of "capability".

Effective verification will provide a solid foundation for the convention. In time, it is to be hoped, it will reduce and perhaps even render unnecessary other security measures such as export controls.

When we are taking such pains to create this solid foundation, we must also make sure that the edifice is sound. The definition of a chemical weapon must be clear and unambiguous; any exceptions must be clearly defined and spelt out to avoid circumvention of the treaty. Uses not prohibited under the convention include those relating to law enforcement and riot control. But if chemicals used for these purposes were entirely outside the purview of the convention, it would in the view of my Government be seriously weakened. It

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

would not be known whether such chemicals were of a type consistent with these purposes. We believe that the wisest course is to limit the type of chemicals permitted, preferably by a list, or if that cannot be agreed, by specifying the types of chemicals that may be used. A requirement for declarations of chemicals to be used for law enforcement and riot control purposes would provide for the necessary transparency and confidence-buidling.

Another outstanding problem concerns old and abandoned CW. In the view of my Government, it is sensible to envisage some relaxation of the more stringent destruction requirements in the case of very old CW which the technical secretariat deems have deteriorated to the extent of being of no military use. But there must be a clear obligation for destruction of abandoned CW which may still have military potential.

The destruction of all CW within a prescribed period has always been a basic tenet of the convention. We are keen to retain this. If, as now appears to be the case, one major possessor foresees difficulty in meeting the 10-year destruction timetable which is set out in the draft convention, this problem will need to be tackled on the basis of specific proposals. But the obligation for destruction must remain.

One of the other major unresolved issues concerns the composition of the executive council. My Government attaches great weight to having an efficient and fully representative body to oversee the operation of this important convention. On the basis of the consultations which have been conducted by Ambassador Tóth in recent days, we believe that a solution to this problem can be found. It will also be important, in recruiting the staff of the technical secretariat, which will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the convention, that the primary consideration should be the efficiency and effectiveness of the technical secretariat, with of course due regard being paid also to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

Before turning to other aspects of the work of this Conference, I should like formally to announce that, having studied the varius offers put forward by countries willing to host the seat of the organization, my Government has decided to support the Dutch bid. We were helped in arriving at our decision by the excellent paper presented by Ambassador Kamal. We were also helped by the visits to The Hague and Vienna, generously arranged by the Dutch and Austrian Governments respectively. We are confident that The Hague will be an efficient host for the organization. We hope that an early decision will now be reached, by consensus, on this issue, so that work can start on preparing for the implementation of the convention as soon as enough States have signed it, as I hope they will before the end of this year. I would note here the generous offer of the French Government to host a signing ceremony.

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

My main objective today has been to put forward some thoughts on the chemical weapons negotiations. For the present, as we are all agreed, these must be the major preoccupation of the Conference. However, as a newcomer, I cannot let this opportunity pass without also casting a brief eye over the rest of our agenda. I find a striking contrast. In the case of chemical weapons, we are working hard and, in terms of the complexities of the subject and the broad composition of this Conference, effectively. We have a clear objective and a clear time-scale which we are collectively determined to meet. On other subjects, however, we seem to be totally stalled and to have no real common objective beyond lecturing each other.

The Conference has as its primary document the so-called "decalogue", bequeathed to us by the first special sesson on disarmament in 1978. This is a reasonably comprehensive list of matters requiring attention if arms control and disarmament are to be pursued on all fronts. However, although the decalogue has pride of place at the beginning of our report, every year we adopt a working agenda which seems to be perversely selected from those areas of the decalogue where no consensus for multilateral action has proved possible - apart, of course, from chemical weapons. This is due both to the nature of the subjects themselves and to the appropriateness of the Conference as a forum for taking them forward.

My Government is committed to a comprehensive nuclear test ban as a long-term objective. However, as we have frequently stated here, so long as nuclear weapons contribute positively to global security, and the United Kingdom's own nuclear weapons contribute positively to our security and that of our allies, we foresee a need to test, from time to time, to ensure that our nuclear weapons remain safe and effective. Under these circumstances, the role of the Conference on this question can in our view only be as a forum for the exchange of views on the necessary practical means for establishing the test ban when the time becomes ripe for its implementation. We are happy to contribute to work on this basis. We also support, for the same reason, the continuing work of the Group of Scientific Experts, whose second technical test has been an important feature of the past 12 months.

The very titles of items 2 and 3 of our agenda - "Cessation of the nuclear arms race" and "Prevention of nuclear war" - are redolent of the cold war. Fortunately, this is now behind us. There have in fact been dramatic developments in the area of nuclear disarmament over the last two or three years and particularly in the last 12 months. But these have very largely resulted from negotiations and developments in the relationship between the United States and the former Soviet Union. My own country has also made a significant contribution. But the role of the Conference in this area also, by the nature of the problem, is for the time being confined to ensuring that all concerned are aware of each other's views with regard to the practicability of further reductions. This is why we prefer to keep this subject for discussion in plenary meetings rather than through an Ad Hoc Committee. I shall be speaking further about these agenda items on behalf of the Western Group next week.

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

The question of negative security assurances is important to many States. It has been possible to make considerable strides in the context of the non-proliferation Treaty and of nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America. Progress in this area is likely to result from negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States in the first instance and is likely to continue to be related to the treaties I have mentioned.

In the case of outer space, important treaties already exist. The partial test-ban Treaty of 1963 bans nuclear explosions in various environments, including outer space for whatever purpose. The Treaty on the peaceful uses of outer space bans the deployment of nuclear weapons in that environment. These are vitally important. But there is no consensus at present for further legal restraints in this area, although we all wish to avoid an "arms race" in outer space. There is no doubt that most current military activities in that environment are of a stabilizing and defensive nature. In particular, outer space has played an important role in the development of transparency in military affairs and is vital for military communications. Important new doctrines involving the development of systems to provide defence against long-range ballistic missiles will also need to mature further before any new legal regime is likely to be possible.

It would be perfectly possible for the Conference to conclude a treaty banning classical radiological weapons tomorrow if this were the general wish. However, it also has to be acknowledged that radiological weapons are not a real military threat, since the inherent problems in their development, production and use outweigh any possible military utility. And in the view of my Government the question of constraints on attacks on nuclear installations is properly a matter relating to the laws of war.

The item "Comprehensive programme of disarmament" is currently in abeyance. My Government has no interest in reviving work on this question. We believe that meaningful disarmament in the context of enhanced security for all States is achieved step by step, taking account of the current political situation. Long-term road maps can have no precision by their very nature and thus give little return for the time and resources expended in their development.

We now of course have a new item, "Transparency in armaments". This is a very challenging subject, since its scope covers all aspects of transparency relating to destabilizing accumulations of armaments, both conventional and unconventional. It remains to be seen whether the Conference can find ways to develop worthwhile legal instruments in this area.

From the foregoing, I conclude that our first task once the CW negotiations are concluded will be to overhaul our agenda and try to put the Conference into a position where it can make concrete contributions in the

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

field of arms control and disarmament as we approach the end of the millenium. At the same time, we shall need to settle the future composition of the Conference. My Government recognizes the frustration caused to States who have long indicated their wish to participate directly in our work. We also recognize that the world has changed dramatically since the decision was taken in 1983 - but not yet implemented - to extend the Conference's membership by four States. However the membership of the United Nations is changing by the month. Leaving this matter for resolution early next year may therefore mean that we can approach it against a more stable background and make decisions which will remain valid for a reasonable period thereafter.

But first we need to conclude the CWC. When, several weeks ago, I first thought about what I should say on the occasion of my first statement in plenary, I intended to say something about the dire consequences, both for this Conference and for the world, of our failure to conclude a convention this year. Happily, however, it has become clear during recent weeks that the possibility of failure no longer exists. The only question is how good a convention it will be. For our part, we are determined that it shall be the best that can be achieved in the remaining weeks available to us.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I am pleased that his first statement to the Conference on Disarmament should have been made with Argentina in the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Yumjav.

Mr. YUMJAV (Mongolia): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you warmly on taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are convinced that your wide diplomatic experience, your deep insight and your high competence will help to ensure the success of our work. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Semichi of Algeria, for the effective guidance of our deliberations in the Conference during his presidency. Taking this opportunity I sincerely welcome our new colleagues, Ambassadors Tanaka and Michael Weston, and wish them every success in their noble endeavours. My delegation has learned with heartfelt regret and great reluctance that our distinguished colleague Ambassador Králik will be leaving us soon. Let me also, however, take this opportunity to extend to Ambassador Králik our deep appreciation for his excellent contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and wish him good health, happiness and success in his future activities.

The present session of the Conference on Disarmament is taking place at a very remarkable period of history. The dramatic achievements in the last few years, in particular the end of the cold war, have opened up unprecedented opportunities for the international community to bring about promising results

(Mr. Yumjav, Mongolia)

in the field of disarmament. We are encouraged by reaching such significant agreements as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the START Treaty. The Presidents of the United States of America and Russia have announced radical cuts in their strategic nuclear weapons. These important unilateral initiatives, in our view, will impart a new impulse to the efforts to achieve further reductions in their nuclear arsenals and contribute to greater stability throughout the world. My delegation welcomes the signing of the Protocol to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) by the United States, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, on 23 May this year, in Lisbon.

My delegation also welcomes the various initiatives taken by several countries in Latin America, namely the Cartagena Declaration on Renunciation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the Mendoza Agreement on the complete prohibition of chemical and biological weapons, as well as the agreement between Brazil and Argentina for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Mongolia, as an Asian country, attaches great importance to strengthening mutual understanding and trust in Asia. Therefore, we highly commend the bilateral agreement between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The Mongolian delegation fully shares the view that the danger of the spread of nuclear weapons constitutes one of the most burning security issues of today. My delegation is convinced that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the pillar of the present non-proliferation system. For that reason, we fully support the universality of the NPT. It is gratifying to note that China and France, as well certain non-nuclear States, have recently acceded to the Treaty. Mongolia, like many other countries, advocates the unlimited extension of the NPT at the next review conference in 1995.

At the current session of the CD some delegations have put forward interesting proposals for the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. In this regard, the call by Mr. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, to the Security Council for sanctions to be imposed on any State party breaching the provisions of the NPT, deserves our full support.

We have a clear mandate from the United Nations General Assembly concerning the nuclear test ban. General Assembly resolution 46/29 reaffirmed the particular responsibilities of the Conference on Disarmament in the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, and in this context urged the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee in 1992. The above-mentioned resolution also requested the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its substantive work on specific and interrelated test-ban issues, taking into account all relevant proposals and future initiatives. Therefore,

(Mr. Yumjav, Mongolia)

my delegation feels that the Ad Hoc Committee should be re-established as soon as possible. It is encouraging to note, moreover, that this year yet another nuclear-weapon State will participate in the work of that Committee.

The Mongolian delegation welcomes the decision of France to suspend the testing of nuclear weapons for 1992, regarding it as an important contribution to nuclear disarmament. It is our hope that other nuclear Powers will follow suit.

We note with satisfaction that the question of "Transparency in armaments" has been included in the agenda of the Conference. In this connection, I cannot but stress the significance of the universal and non-discriminatory Register of Conventional Arms which was established at United Nations Headquarters at the beginning of this year. It is our wish that all Member States, including the world's major arms suppliers, will provide the United Nations with data in accordance with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/36 L.

The negotiations on a chemical weapons convention have entered a final and decisive stage. The successful conclusion of a convention this year will not only prove the efficacy of our Conference but will also be a landmark in the history of disarmament. Mongolia supports the convening of a ministerial meeting this fall with a view to resolving outstanding political problems in the draft convention. We welcome the offer made by France to hold a signature conference for the chemical weapons convention in Paris before the end of the year. Such a representative gathering of dignitaries, in our opinion, will undoubtedly contribute to ensuring the universality of the future convention. My delegation welcomes the decision of the Russian Federation to assume responsibility for the elimination of all chemical weapons of the former USSR.

The Government of Mongolia highly commends Australian efforts aimed at speeding up the process of negotiations on the chemical weapons convention. The compromise draft convention submitted by Australia no doubt gave impetus to expediting discussions on various aspects of the convention. My delegation deeply appreciates the excellent contribution made by Ambassador Adolf von Wagner, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, the bureau and the German delegation in preparing working paper CD/CW/WP.400. We are convinced that this well-structured document, serving as a good basis for further negotiations, will meet our common aspirations to finalize the convention this year.

It is encouraging to note that in recent weeks negotiations have intensified on such complicated and unresolved questions as verification, the executive council and old and abandoned chemical weapons. It is well known that in the future convention challenge inspection is the core of verification. My delegation, like most others, subscribes to the opinion that the warning time for inspections should be kept short and that challenge proceedings should be kept simple. In addition, these procedures should match the interests of the challenged and requesting States parties. We have no

(Mr. Yumjav, Mongolia)

objection to supporting the idea of observer participation in the inspection team. It is for this reason that my delegation supported the concept of graduated, managed access to challenged sites, contained in document CD/CW/WP.352, submitted last year by the delegations of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

We are of the opinion that verification in chemical industries should be balanced. In this connection, my delegation expresses its profound thanks to the Swiss delegation for organizing, at the end of January in Basel, with the participation of Swiss chemical industries, a most useful symposium on chemical industry and disarmament.

As far as the composition of the executive council is concerned, I appreciate very much the efforts of Ambassador Tóth to reach acceptable solutions. In our view, the executive council should be based essentially on equitable geographical criteria, while also taking into account industrial criteria. It is also advisable to bear in mind the experience of United Nations agencies for allocating the seats of their executive bodies, in particular of the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors. My delegation is against the excessive expansion of the overall size of the executive council's numbers. We have no objection to the improvement of the last options of Ambassador Tóth, based on geographical criteria, giving due consideration to small States' interests as well.

In the opinion of our delegation, the question of personnel representation of the technical secretariat is also of importance. In this regard, I wish to express my delegation's gratitude to the Government of Finland for training prospective inspectors from developing countries. I would also like to welcome similar initiatives announced by the Netherlands, Germany and Norway. Such efforts will no doubt contribute to equitable representation in the inspectorate of the technical secretariat.

My delegation sincerely welcomes the offers by Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland to host the future organization for the chemical weapons convention and appreciates the efforts that they have made to provide the most favourable conditions for the future organization's functioning. My special thanks also to the delegations of Austria and the Netherlands for the generous hospitality extended to us during our visit to Vienna and The Hague. Concerning the site of the future organization for the prohibition of chemical weapons, the Mongolian authorities have come to the conclusion that The Hague should serve as the most appropriate one.

Mongolia, which possesses no chemical weapons, shares the view that the future convention will become universal and effective so long as it contains clearly expressed provisions for automatic assistance to States parties endangered by the use of chemical weapons irrespective of all other considerations.

Before concluding, I would like to confirm again our wish that Mongolia will become an original signatory to the convention.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Mongolia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, Mr. Gizowski.

Mr. GIZOWSKI (Poland): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that you will again demonstrate your well-known diplomatic skill in discharging your responsible duties. I wish you every success and pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation. My congratulations also go to your predecessor in the chair, Ambassador Semichi of Algeria, for skilfully guiding us during the preceding term. We listened with great interest to the farewell statement of Ambassador Králik of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, our good and close neighbour not only in Europe but in Geneva as well. We regret his intending departure and would like to express our appreciation of his important contributions to the work of the Conference. We wish him every success and would like to assure him that we will miss him and particularly his great sense of humour he has shown so often. My delegation extends a warm welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassador Tanaka of Japan and Ambassador Sir Michael Weston of the United Kingdom. We look forward to working closely with each of you.

I will be brief. As we are coming closer to the completion of our negotiations of the chemical weapons convention, a number of decisions should be made on the few remaining issues. One of them is the question of the future seat of the organization. My delegation greatly appreciates the efforts of Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan to facilitate the decision-making process. We are grateful to the candidates and would like to commend them on the detailed manner in which they have presented the advantages of their respective offers and for their fair and sincere competition for the seat of headquarters. It is appropriate also to express our gratitude for the opportunity provided to us to get acquainted with the proposed candidates on-site. I am taking the floor today to announce that after careful analysis my Government has decided to support The Hague for the seat of the future organization for the prohibition of chemical weapons.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Ambassador O'Sullivan.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (Australia): Mr. President, may I join the others who have spoken this morning in saying how pleased we are to see you in the Chair of our Conference, you who are a friend to all of us and whose skills are admired by all of us? May I also take the opportunity of saying, on behalf of my delegation, to the Algerian delegation, our thanks for the exemplary way in which Ambassador Semichi presided over us last month?

I would like to comment on two issues this morning, and with the words of Pericles ringing in my ears, I trust I am venturing on to glory, not on to disaster. I want to first of all express the regret of the Australian Government that it has not proved possible so far to establish a committee

(Mr. O'Sullivan, Australia)

on banning the testing of nuclear weapons. The impasse in this Conference, however, is not matched by a similar stasis in the real world. I note, for instance, that there is a very important decision by President Mitterrand to have a moratorium on French nuclear testing for this year, one which we, Australia, greatly welcome and we think is of great significance. Recently, there has been a major statement of importance by the Prime Minister of Canada. There has been press speculation, which I understand is well founded, about a whole series of ideas taking place within the United States national security bureaucracy about ideas for limiting - perhaps even banning - testing. And, of course, going in the opposite direction, we have had a recent and massive Chinese test. So things are going on in the real world while we, unfortunately, are not considering them here. There are real questions being raised about what use nuclear weapons now have in the sort of world we have moved into. Is there a need to test them? Can their safety be assured by means other than testing them? These are questions that we think ought to be debated here, and we want to record our frustration and our disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament so far has proved unable to establish a committee to do that. So, we look forward to some changes.

Secondly, I want to comment on another matter that has also been raised by several other speakers this morning. The Australian Government, like others, has been looking closely at the question of the selection of the site for the organization for the prevention of chemical weapons. We have had the advantage of three excellent bids and all sites, in our view, would be very competent hosts and well able to deal with the requirements of the organization for the prevention of chemical weapons. In weighing up the factors to reach a preference, we have tried to take careful account of economic, political, infrastructural, industrial and scientific elements. Obviously, in such a complex equation, there is not an absolute choice but, on balance, our preference is for The Hague.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Australia for his statement, as well as for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Cuba, Mrs. Bauta Solés.

Mrs. BAUTA SOLES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): My delegation has already had the opportunity to congratulate you on taking up your duties as President of this Conference, but it is always a pleasure to reiterate our satisfaction at seeing you presiding over our work. Also to reiterate our gratitude to the delegation of Algeria for its work in the same post during the previous month.

I have received instructions from the Government of Cuba to thank the respective Governments of the Netherlands, Switzerland and Austria formally on this occasion for the balanced and generous bids they have tendered to this Conference in connection with the headquarters of the future chemical weapons organization. My capital has devoted careful attention to this offer. We should also like to express our special gratitude for the generous hospitality

(Mrs. Bauta Solés, Cuba)

we enjoyed in the cities of The Hague and Vienna during our recent visits to the two cities. The Government of Cuba has decided to lend its support to the city of Vienna in its aspiration to host the future chemical weapons organization. It also hopes that a decision on this subject will be a consensus decision of the Conference on Disarmament.

I do not wish to conclude without joining those who have thanked Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan this morning for the work he has been doing in connection with the consultations being held on the subject.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement and once again for her kind words. I have no further speakers on the list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor this morning? The distinguished delegation of Chile has asked for the floor. Mr. Raimundo González, you have the floor.

Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) (translated from Spanish): First of all, Mr. President, and on behalf of my Government, I would like to congratulate you most sincerely and expressly on attaining such an important position within the Conference on Disarmament, a post to which we attach the greatest importance and one which we believe in your hands offers real possibilities of moving towards essentially productive purposes. Hence - we would like this to be clear - the satisfaction of the Chilean Government at seeing you guiding this session of the Conference.

My delegation did not intend to take part in the debate in this plenary. However, we believe that the statements we have heard this morning give rise to a number of interesting ideas and in this sense we believe that the distinguished Ambassador of Australia has shed some light which we deem particularly important, and a few questions remain which it would be a good idea for us to be able to consider subsequently. I am specifically referring to the nuclear item, the item on nuclear testing and everything related to this important matter. He spoke to us of the differences or discrepancies between what is debated in the Conference on Disarmament, or rather the lack of intent and political will to debate items which are on the agenda, and what is happening in the real world. That real world also includes Latin America. Latin America, we believe without boasting, is giving a very specific example in terms of the establishment of clear parameters on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Your own country, Mr. President, and Brazil have signed an important declaration on this matter. My country, along with Argentina and Brazil, is carrying out important negotiations in terms of applying the Treaty of Tlatelolco if matters so indicate. I would say that there is a very tangible, very clear and very determined political will in different areas of the world on the nuclear issue which this Conference cannot afford the luxury of evading. Hence in this sense we would like to endorse fully the concerns put forward to us so clearly this morning by the distinguished Ambassador of Australia, and we cannot fail to do so bearing in mind the background which, in the case of Latin America, represents keen concern on such a crucial subject.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, I will now turn to another matter. Today, as always, the secretariat has circulated the timetable of meetings that the Conference and its subsidiary bodies will be holding during the coming week. As is customary, the timetable is indicative in nature and can be amended if necessary. I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Before commenting on the subject you have tabled, Mr. President, I should like first of all to express my regret that my neighbour Ambassador Králik, the Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia and its representative in the Conference on Disarmament, will shortly be leaving us. I pay tribute to Ambassador Králik for his human warmth, for the good-neighbourly relations linking Egypt and Czechoslovakia in this hall, and for his positive contribution to the deliberations in this Conference and to the various discussions in which I have taken part, in both official and unofficial meetings held in Geneva outside this Conference. I would therefore like to express my sincere appreciation and warmest gratitude to him, and would particularly like to mention his hosting of informal meetings in the Czechoslovakia mission on economic and social reform in the United Nations system and his positive contribution on this key issue. I am sorry to see him leaving Geneva, and on behalf of Egypt and my colleagues I should like to convey to him our sincere wishes for success, health and happiness.

Regarding the timetable of meetings from 8 to 12 June 1992, I have several comments to make. The first concerns transparency in armaments. Time permitting, I have always been willing to hold informal meetings in the Conference this week, and I have informed the secretariat of the Conference accordingly. It appears, however, that this was impossible because several meetings have been scheduled this week, which I fully understand. This is a very important question and the various delegations attach a great deal of importance to it. We spent a good deal of time seeking consensus on the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Conference, as decided at the Conference meeting on 26 May 1992. I was therefore concerned to ensure that such meetings were held soon so as to complete discussions on this important item as soon as possible.

As for the proposed timetable, there are two meetings; the first is on Tuesday, 9 June, at 10 a.m., to which I have no objection. Nor do I object to any meeting being held at any time, provided it does not clash with my commitments to attend other meetings in Geneva. The second meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, 11 June, at 3 p.m. I regret, Sir, that the Feast of the Holy Sacrifice, which is one of the most important Muslim feast days, falls on 11 June, and I personally will be unable to work on that day whether or not the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is held then. I told Mr. Berasategui, the Secretary-General of the Conference, that I hoped we would not be having the plenary that day, nor any other meeting in which my country's delegation was to take part. Consequently, the day could have been moved to Wednesday, Tuesday or Friday. If the Conference does not adopt a

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

decision to move that day's meetings to the Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday, I will be unable to work, as observance of religious feasts is extremely important for Islam and for Muslims. I will not therefore be able to work on that day, and the Conference should decide to move the official meeting to Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday, but if it insists on holding it on that day, I simply shall not be in a position to take part. I shall therefore be unable to chair the informal meeting on transparency in armaments on that day; I am ready to chair it on any other day.

While I am on the subject, it should be said with regard to the decision we adopted on 26 May 1992 that the title of the agenda item as it appears in the Arabic translation should be amended; the Arabic version uses the word الشفافية (clarity) in referring to the question of armaments, whereas the word used should be الوضوح (transparency). This applies to document CD/1150 of 27 May 1992, and the same error is repeated in CD/1119/Add.1. The Arabic refers to "clarity" in armaments and "clarity" in arms, whereas the correct word to use is "transparency" in armaments. The same expression should be used in both documents. There are also many other errors in the Arabic version of the document which give rise to confusion and ambiguity. I shall correct them on behalf of the Arab delegations and hand them to the secretariat.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank Ambassador Zahran for his statement. We have taken due note of the efforts he is going to undertake in dealing with the new item on our agenda concerning transparency in armaments, and in that regard I thank him for drawing our attention to the need to modify the Arabic version on this matter; I believe the secretariat has taken due note of the request. I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria, Mr. Tefiani.

Mr. TEFIANI (Algeria) (translated from Arabic): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to express the appreciation of my delegation at seeing you take up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament this month. We are certain that your experience and competence will prove effective in the success of guaranteeing our work. I would also like, through you, to convey my country's thanks for the kind words expressed concerning my delegation. We are equally thankful for the cooperation shown during our presidency of the Conference. Last but not least, I would also like to associate my delegation with those that have wished His Excellency Ambassador Králik of Czechoslovakia success in his forthcoming activities.

We believe that the United Nations has no particular religion and belongs to no particular religious denomination. In this respect, meetings of the Conference on Disarmament have been cancelled in the past because of religious holidays, and last week's plenary was brought forward from Thursday to Tuesday because of Ascension Day. In addition, according to the timetable of meetings submitted for next week, 8 June will also be an official holiday because of Whitsun. We would therefore like to ask, as has already been agreed in the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, that 11 June should be an official holiday to enable the Islamic delegations to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Sacrifice. I therefore wish to associate my delegation with what was said by Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Kamal.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I address the plenary under your presidency, may I express my own and my delegation's great pleasure at working under the wise stewardship of a colleague, and for his country, for whom we have so much admiration and friendship and affection and respect? On the substance of the intervention made by Ambassador Mounir Zahran with reference to next Thursday, 11 June, my delegation faces the same constraints, which occur, incidentally, just on two days every year. I urge all our colleagues to manifest their understanding and appreciation of the need for reprogramming all meetings scheduled for that Thursday, 11 June.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other deletgation wish to take the floor? The distinguished delegation of Iran has asked to speak.

Mr. TABATABOEE (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, allow me also to join the previous speakers in expressing my delegation's gratitude at seeing you preside over our deliberations. It will only suffice to add that my delegation also will be observing an important religious holiday on Thursday, 11 June and thus will be unable to attend any United Nations meetings, and therefore it would be very much appreciated if these meetings could be postponed and we call upon the Conference to take proper measures in this regard.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Iran for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor? If not, I think one of the traditions of the Conference on Disarmament has been to accommodate the concerns and interests of the member States, especially when dealing with such undoubtedly special situations as that mentioned by Ambassador Zahran, Ambassador Kamal and our colleagues from Algeria and Iran. However, since this matter is something that is not for the Chair to settle alone, but has to be put before all of you, I would venture to consult the Conference on Disarmament on the request made by our colleagues for the cancellation of next Thursday's plenary meeting, bringing it forward to Tuesday. In consulting you I would like to share with you the reasons for which the timetable for next week contains provision for a meeting on Thursday 11th, and that seems to be the case because the United Nations official holidays are set by the Secretary-General of the Organization and, as we all know, vary depending on the customs of the host country. Generally speaking, the holidays correspond to national or religious holidays or other celebrations. As I remind you of this factor I would also like you to note that we have received a communication from an observer State in the Conference on Disarmament, the distinguished delegation of Norway, which has informed us of a visit by the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of that country on Thursday 11th. Against this general

(The President)

background for your information, I would like to ask whether there is any objection to moving to Tuesday 9th the plenary meeting scheduled for Thursday 11th. The distinguished delegation of Australia has asked me for the floor - Ambassador O'Sullivan.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (Australia): There is a question now in my mind because of the comments that you just made about the visit of the Norwegian official. There has been a tradition here, as you said, of trying to accommodate different delegations' requirements, and I think that is a tradition we would like to see preserved, so I understand the difficulty of a number of delegations participating at meetings on Thursday of next week and I understand and fully respect those decisions, but if it is also the case that we are going to have a visit by the senior official from Norway, I have a question now in my mind about taking a decision to cancel a plenary, so before I participated in any decision, I would like to know what the status of that visit is - this is the first thing. Then, if it is still on, I would like to revisit this issue.

Mr. BERNHARDSEN (Norway): Mr. President, as this is the first time I speak in this forum, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate you on your position as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Changing at this very late moment the date for the plenary would, of course, create a practical difficulty for us. I cannot say now whether it would be possible for our State Secretary in our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to change her plans - that we would have to refer to Oslo and I am not sure I could provide a quick answer; maybe after lunch I could. I would hope, since this is a suggestion which has come up only a week before, that we would be able to retain the meeting as planned - a plenary has been scheduled for many months now.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Norway for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I recognize the representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Kamal.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan): With reference to the important intervention made by our colleague from Norway, I would just like to explain to him a fact perhaps that he is not aware of, which is that these two Muslim feasts, of which, as I said, there are only two in the year, are dependent on the lunar calendar and therefore their date cannot be fixed in advance, and the question, therefore, of advance programming is one which is beyond the competence of anybody. It just so happens that it is now that we know that the holiday will fall on Thursday, 11 June, and the request that is being made is to see whether our colleagues can somehow adjust their convenience in order to meet a requirement which would otherwise prevent us, or some of us, from listening to what would be, I am sure, a very important communication from the State Secretary of Norway.

Mr. AZIKIWE (Nigeria): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, I wish to say how pleased we are at seeing you preside over our meeting. I come from a country, Nigeria, that has a sizeable number of Muslims. Naturally, my delegation is in sympathy with the views already expressed by some of our colleagues. I believe it will be in bad taste if we go ahead and hold a plenary on Thursday. I have a proposal which I want to put forward for your consideration. Will it be possible for us to hold a plenary on Tuesday? And if it is not possible for the Norwegian official to address the meeting on Tuesday, the visit could be rescheduled for another period. I wish to call to your attention that even in Rio de Janeiro, where a very important meeting is currently being held, that is, the Earth Summit, Thursday has been declared a public holiday and I believe that there will be no session on Thursday, 11 June, at the Earth Summit.

Mr. AL-HASSAN (Oman) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I should first like to congratulate you on your presidency of this Conference and, following on from what has been said by speakers from Islamic and other delegations, particularly His Excellency, the Ambassador of Nigeria, I would like to mention that there is a summit being held at head of State and other levels, namely the Earth Summit. Changes have been made to the Summit in view of the time schedule and previous commitments of such heads of State to ensure that it takes account of the holy religious ceremonies of a number of delegations. My delegation would like to take part in the plenaries of the Conference on Disarmament and we therefore support the request submitted by these delegations to change the Conference timetable. My delegation supports the proposal for 9 June next week.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Oman for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now have a list of three colleagues who wish to speak. I would ask you that, perhaps after hearing our friends from Norway, Canada and Peru, we may in the interests of all take a decision that would enable us to move forward in keeping with our tradition. I give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. BERNHARDSEN (Norway): In my view, it is important to respect religious holidays and I believe we should do what we can to accommodate this wish. To the comment by Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan, I believe the lunar movements are pretty time-predictable and that this holiday probably was known earlier this year, but the reason for taking the floor was to ask the plenary whether Wednesday or Friday would be available dates, and also whether we would have at this very moment to make a decision on next week's schedule, or whether there would be other ways to make a decision. I would, of course, have to refer to my Ministry to see whether my State Secretary would be available, but I believe maybe Wednesday or Friday could be easier from her perspective.

Mr. ROBERTSON (Canada): Mr. President, since I am speaking to you for the first time, let me also join those in offering you our best wishes in your tasks during this important month. The Canadian delegation became aware of the likelihood of the Feast of the Holy Sacrifice falling next Thursday only as a result of the last CWC bureau meeting, but it has given us a little while to think about what that might imply, and I am speaking now in our capacity as a single delegation and not on behalf of the Western Group, which we happen to be also the Coordinator for this month, because I have not had a chance to consult my colleagues. I fully sympathize with the wish of our Muslim colleagues not to work on Thursday next week and I believe it would be the wish of the Western Group to go along with that wish and to accommodate it. Saying that, however, I am not so sure that we would also want to agree with Ambassador Azikiwe's proposal that we shift the plenary to Tuesday or that we try to fit in for next week a second meeting on "Transparency in armaments", and I say that simply because I believe that in our present circumstances it is important that we not, by rearranging our programme, defer substantive work on the chemical weapons convention Ad Hoc Committee negotiations. So that led me, before hearing from our Norwegian colleague in his last intervention, to recall the fact that we do have a tradition of holding special plenaries for distinguished visitors, and having looked at the timetable it seems to me that the place where a special plenary might most easily be fitted in would indeed be the afternoon of Wednesday, 10 June or possibly even a brief interruption of our normal consultations among groups on Wednesday morning. However, the afternoon would be easier because we all do normally meet in the morning, and the two discussions that are taking place in the chemical weapons field on Wednesday are discussions at which normally experts participate, so that that should make it possible to staff both the plenary that afternoon and to continue work on the two CW issues. I don't know if that proposal would meet with general approval here and, of course, it would depend on whether or not State Secretary Mrs. Helga Hernes can be here and we don't know that yet. But I think that my inclination as a delegation, even though we had, in fact, planned to deliver a statement next Thursday on our own behalf which we can't have ready sooner, would be not to substitute a regular plenary but rather just to drop the plenary on Thursday and go on to next week's regular schedule. In other words, stick to the programme except for the fact that either we would have a special plenary on Wednesday perhaps, or possibly Friday, but not to try to replace the two meetings we would lose. The only other thing I would like to comment on is that this will mean that there will be a lot of secretariat personnel available on Thursday who will not be working, and that is unfortunate given our budgetary constraints, but I don't know how we can get around that unless those of us who are not going to be on holiday can find other things to do with their time that might use those resources.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and his kind words addressed to the Chair. I can see that several of our colleagues are interested in taking the floor, but I think we are in a situation that is very easy, easy to solve. Consequently, after listening to our colleagues from Peru and Morocco, I think we can adopt a practical solution that we will all be very happy with. I give the floor to the representative of Peru, Minister Calderón.

Mr. CALDERON (Peru) (translated from Spanish): My delegation considers that the objections raised by our friends who practise the Muslim religion are justified, and obviously we have to avoid needlessly ruffling the sensibilities of the States representated here and also we have to avoid giving those who are honouring us with their presence this morning the impression that this is a more complicated problem than negotiating article IX of the future convention. As you put it very well, this is a very simple matter. Very specifically I should like to suggest that we delegate to you and the Secretary-General, in consultation with the delegation of Norway, the task of moving next week's plenary meeting to Tuesday morning or Wednesday morning. I think the regional groups have no problem with delaying their consultations. I hope that the distinguished Norwegian visitor will have time either on Tuesday or Wednesday morning and we will settle the problem once and for all. In any event, if her presence is not possible owing to an already duly planned schedule, I think that the coming week's formal plenary could in any case take place either on Tuesday or on Wednesday.

Mr. ZNIBER (Morocco) (translated from French): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to associate my delegation with those that have already congratulated you on taking up the presidency of this Conference and wished you every success in your noble task. I do not wish to complicate this debate. I would just like to say that naturally, of course, my delegation shares the views expressed by those that felt that next Thursday should be a day of rest within the Conference. However, following the second statement made by the distinguished representative of Norway, my delegation suggests that the Conference should give the distinguished delegation of Norway carte blanche to decide itself on the time and date when it would like the Conference to receive Her Excellency the Norwegian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement, and I am happy to see that we are all in agreement on finding a solution that will enable us to accommodate the interests of all delegations, and in particular such important interests as the celebration of religious holidays. I can see that there is consensus that we should not hold any meetings on Thursday 11th. So we shall cancel the plenary on Thursday 11th in the morning and I shall initiate consultations with the delegations concerned and the delegation of Norway to see whether we can plan the plenary meeting on Wednesday 10th or Friday 12th, so that the Conference can hear the important statement by the State Secretary of Norway and also continue dealing with the important subjects before it. Consequently, the timetable of meetings we have for the coming week will be amended and announced to all delegations. Also, in accordance with what the Ambassador of Egypt has indicated, we shall try and give the subject of transparency in armaments what place we can in keeping with our programme of work. If there are no further comments, we may say that it is so decided. The secretariat will inform us of the results of the consultations.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): As I announced at the outset of this plenary meeting, the Conference will hold an informal meeting on substantive questions pertaining to item 3 of the agenda, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". Following that, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons will meet in room V at 12.30 p.m.

I have no further business, and unless any other delegation wishes to speak I think we can adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be the result of consultations with the delegations concerned.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.